

# CHRIST THE KING LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**UNALTERED AUGSBURG CONFESSION: *We believe, teach, and confess...***

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **WHAT IS THIS?**

**The Augsburg Confession** (Latin **Confessio Augustana** [see CTK cornerstone]) is comprised of 28 articles that constitute the basic confession of the Lutheran churches. The Augsburg Confession was presented June 25, 1530, in German and Latin at the Diet of Augsburg to the emperor Charles V by seven Lutheran princes and two imperial free cities. The principal author was the reformer Philipp Melancthon, who drew on earlier Lutheran statements of faith. Its primary purpose was Christian unity so that European "Christians" could defend themselves against the Moslem invaders (variously called "the Turks" and more offensively Mohammedans). To this end, it was a defense of the Lutherans against misrepresentations and sought to provide a statement of Lutheran theology that would be acceptable to the Roman Catholics. On August 3 the Catholic theologians replied with the Confutation, which condemned 13 articles of the Confession, accepted 9 without qualifications, and approved 6 with qualifications. The emperor refused to receive a Lutheran counter-reply offered on September 22, but Melancthon used it as the basis for his Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531). This 1530 version of the Confession (known as the "unaltered" version) has been authoritative for Lutherans, but proponents of the eucharistic doctrine of Huldrych Zwingli and John Calvin accepted a modified edition prepared by Melancthon (the *Variata* of 1540).

The first 21 articles of the Augsburg Confession set forth Lutheran doctrine in order to demonstrate that "they dissent in no article of faith from the Catholic Church." The remaining seven articles discuss abuses that had crept into the Western church in the centuries immediately preceding the Reformation: communion under one kind (the people received the bread only), enforced priestly celibacy, the mass as an expiatory sacrifice, compulsory confession, human institutions designed to merit grace, abuses in connection with monasticism, and the expanded authority claimed by the bishops. On such topics as justification the Confession used vague, rather than precise, language.

The Confession was translated into English in 1536 and influenced the Thirty-nine Articles of the Anglicans and the Twenty-five Articles of Religion of the Methodists.

## **HOW IS THE UAC USED?**

### **1. To unite Lutherans (and others) worldwide.**

#### **Lutheran communions that subscribe to the Unaltered Augsburg Confession may become members of the Lutheran World Federation.**

Lutherans requiring adherence to other “confessional” documents such as The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the North American Lutheran Church are not admitted into the LWF.

### **2. As a basis for full communion agreements.**

Acceptance of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession “**as a true witness to the Gospel,**” is required for full communion with the ELCA as is therefore a part of the following full-communion agreements:

#### **A Formula of Agreement (1997)**

As churches of the Reformation the ELCA, the [Presbyterian Church \(USA\)](#), the [Reformed Church in America](#), and the [United Church of Christ](#) entered into full communion in 1997. After 32 years of dialogue – and in light of identified doctrinal differences and consensus – these churches worked together to form a foundational document titled, “[A Formula of Agreement.](#)”

#### **Called to Common Mission (1999)**

In 1999, the ELCA entered into full communion with [The Episcopal Church](#). “[Called to Common Mission: A Lutheran Proposal for a Revision of the Concordat of Agreement](#)” is the document that describes that relationship. The Episcopal Church took its final action on this relationship at its 2000 General Convention in Denver.

#### **Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion (1999)**

In 1999, the ELCA entered into full communion with [the Moravian Church](#) as it was described in the document, “[Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion.](#)” The [Southern](#) and [Northern](#) Provinces of the Moravian Church in America also approved this document. In 2007, the ELCA extended a full communion invitation to the [Alaska Province of the Moravian Church in America](#).

## **Confessing Our Faith Together (2009)**

In 2009, the ELCA entered into full communion with the [United Methodist Church](#). The United Methodist Church General Conference had approved the agreement in 2008. "[Confessing Our Faith Together](#)" is the full communion agreement with the United Methodist Church. This marked the first time that the ELCA had moved into a full communion relationship with a church that had a membership larger than that of the ELCA.

## **In dialogues toward unity with the Roman Catholic communion.**

### **The Augsburg Confession is addressed in the 1999 Joint Declaration on Justification between the Lutheran World Federation and the Holy See.**

In 1999, the ecumenical partnership between members of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church led to the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ). This document intended to show that both the Lutheran and Roman Catholic Church could articulate a common understanding of our justification by God's grace through faith in Christ, the issue that was at the heart of the Protestant Reformation.

From the JDDJ:

It does not cover all that either church teaches about justification; it does encompass a consensus on basic truths of the doctrine of justification and shows that the remaining differences in its explication are no longer the occasion for doctrinal condemnations (Preamble, 5) Opposing interpretations and applications of the biblical message of justification were in the sixteenth century a principal cause of the division of the Western church and led as well to doctrinal condemnations. A common understanding of justification is therefore fundamental and indispensable to overcoming that division. By appropriating insights of recent biblical studies and drawing on modern investigations of the history of theology and dogma, the post-Vatican II ecumenical dialogue has led to a notable convergence concerning justification, with the result that this Joint Declaration is able to formulate a consensus on basic truths concerning the doctrine of justification. In light of this consensus, the corresponding doctrinal condemnations of the sixteenth century do not apply to today's partner. (JDDJ, 1:13)

### **3. As part of the ELCA's Confession of Faith**

ELCA Constitutions (Churchwide, Synodical and Model Constitution for Congregations) all contain this statement of faith:

#### **Chapter 2. CONFESSIO OF FAITH**

2.01. This church confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

2.02. This church confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe. a. Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation. b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ. c. The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

2.03. This church accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith, and life. 2.04. This church accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of this church.

**2.05. This church accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.**

2.06. This church accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

2.07. This church confesses the Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scripture and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world.

**4. As a requirement for ELCA rostered ministers (promise and practice).**

**All ELCA rostered leaders (bishops, deacons, pastors) upon ordination and installation are required to respond affirmatively to this public question:**

The church in which you are to be ordained confesses that the holy scriptures are the word of God and are the norm of its faith and life. We accept, teach, and confess the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds. We also acknowledge the Lutheran confessions as true witnesses and faithful expositions of the holy scriptures. Will you therefore preach and teach in accordance with the holy scriptures and these creeds and confessions?

*Each candidate responds: I will, and I ask God to help me.*